

REMARKS

The application has been amended and is believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claim 2 has been incorporated into claim 1.

The new claims find support from the original claims and the disclosure of published application paragraphs [0019] - [0026].

Claims 1-4 and 7-8 were rejected as anticipated by LARSON 2003/0091410.

Claims 1, 2 and 9 were rejected as obvious over SCHMIDT 6,318,951 in view of WU 2002/0102155.

Claims 5 and 6 were rejected as obvious over LARSON in view of WOOTEN 6,156,580.

Claims 7 and 8 were rejected as obvious over SCHMIDT in view of WU and in further view of GONZALEZ 2002/0071756.

With reference to published application paragraph [0019] (emphasis added), "The apparatus 1' has a first linear arranged array of a plurality of four process units 31, 33, 35, 37 and a second linear arranged array of a plurality of another four process units 32, 34, 36, 38. In each such process unit one single wafer (Wm) can be treated in a horizontal position. The process units shown in this embodiment can be selected from wet spin treating units, spin coating units, temperature treating units or any other single wafer process unit. The lines, in which the arrays of the plurality of said process units 31-38 are

arranged, are substantially perpendicular to the front plane 5. In this front plane 5 two cassette-holding units 15 for holding at least one cassette storing at least one wafer-shaped article therein. In this case each cassette-holding unit 15 is a front opening unified port (FOUP)."

Unlike LARSON, the invention does not include process units that treat plural wafers at one time. Claim 1 has been appropriately amended to make this explicit. New claim 10 makes the horizontal position a claim recitation.

LARSON neither anticipates nor renders obvious any of the claims since LARSON is directed to a prior art device that batch treats wafers in a vertical position.

Withdrawal of the LARSON anticipation rejection is therefore solicited.

As to claims 1, 2 and 9 being obvious over SCHMIDT in view of WU, note that although WU does disclose being able to flip or pivot a wafer, WU does not disclose any means to hold a wafer vertically while moving the WU device and the vertically-held wafer along a track. For example, a short order cook who flips pancakes from a pan may be said to flip the pancake, but the short order cook does not hold the pancake vertically at any time. Much the same, WU does not disclose any means to hold a wafer vertically.

Further, there is no teaching in WU of transporting a vertically-held wafer along a transport path defined by the

linear track, a width of the transport unit and of the transport path being less than a width of the wafer-shaped article. Therefore, there is no disclosure in WU of the wafer being moved along the track while being held in the vertical position.

See claim 10 reciting "..., and the transport path of the picked-up wafer is narrower than a diameter of the held wafer".

Also see claims 13 and 16 - last recitation "a transport path of the held wafer is narrower than a diameter of the held wafer". Reference is made to Figures 1-2 and the sentence spanning pages 1-2 of the specification, "An advantage of the invention is that the width of the transport path ...". See also lines 3-4 of specification [age 4 "Therefore the transport path is narrower than the diameter of a wafer."

Still further, the disclosed "flipping" in WU does not appear to be a vertical flipping. See paragraph [0080] for "flipping the semiconductor wafer 192 over ..." a "... free space above the SCARA arm" is needed". It appears as if the wafer is flipped about a horizontal axis perpendicular to the direction of linear movement. Thus, WU does not appear to disclose the wafer every being a position of "a substantially vertical plane parallel to the linear track".

Thus, the obviousness rejection of SCHMIDT and WU is not believed to be viable. Withdrawal of this rejection is also solicited.

Discussion of the dependent claims is not believed necessary as they are allowable at least for depending from an allowable claim.

The new claims are all believed allowable for the reasons discussed above and in that the prior art does not teach or suggest the recited combination of features.

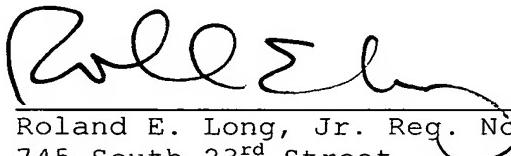
Allowance of all the claims is solicited.

Should there be any matters that need to be resolved in the present application; the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

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APPENDIX:

The Appendix includes the following item:

- a new Abstract of the Disclosure